



May 5, 2017

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In the Matter Of)
)
Leonard Schrager Restoring Internet Freedom) WC Docket No. 17-108
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The Benton Foundation offers the following for the newly-opened WC Docket No.

Internet-based entrepreneurs are already weighing in on the Commission's proposal on network neutrality. Take, for example, Deepak Puri, a former Oracle and VMware executive, the founder of SkilledAnalysts.com, an Internet of things (IoT) consulting firm and co-founder of Democracy Labs, which connects tech and media volunteers with progressive causes and campaigns. In *What happens when 'Net Neutrality' becomes 'Pay-To-Play'*? Puri writes about how important network neutrality rules are for organizing large-scale citizen demonstrations. The Women's March on Washington, one of the largest demonstrations in our country's history, may not have been possible without the current Open Internet rules.

The Commission should do whatever it can to protect and promote citizen's freedom of speech, freedom to peaceably assemble, and freedom to petition the Government.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kevin Taglang

Benton Foundation

Evanston, IL 60202



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TECH ACTIVIST

By Deepak Puri, ★ Advisor, CIO

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OPINION

What happens when 'Net Neutrality' becomes 'Pay-To-Play'?

"Organizing the Women's March on Washington would have been much harder without Net Neutrality. We may not even have been able to afford it."

Net neutrality is like a public park that anyone can use. 'Pay-To-Play' is a private club that only rich members use.

What happens to the internet when access isn't equal? (Or to paraphrase George Orwell in Animal Farm, "We're all equal, but some are more equal than others").

How could this impact consumers, businesses and non-profits?

"Ajit Pai, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission outlined a sweeping plan to loosen the government's oversight of high-speed internet providers, a rebuke of a landmark policy approved two years ago to ensure that all online content is treated the same by the companies that deliver broadband service to Americans", reports the NYT.

How could this impact charities and non-profit groups? To find out, I interviewed Sam Frank, the Executive Director of Blue Boost. He led the Digital Operations and Data for the Women's March on Washington and understands the consequences of this proposed change.

The Women's March depended on internet access

"The FCC announcement to roll back almost all regulatory protections for content providers and get rid of 'Net Neutrality' is a big deal", he explained.

"Net Neutrality protects the public from internet network giants, like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T, picking and choosing what we see on our smartphones and computers. If net neutrality is removed from the books, these companies would be able to charge specific companies and NGOs additional money to deliver their web content and traffic. That could include all content. How?"

Net neutrality is a set of complex rules, but they boil down to one idea, if you're going to deliver the internet to people, you need to deliver all of it equally. You can't single out parts of it. Internet companies really want to be able to do that, because they could charge content providers like Netflix, Facebook, and others a lot of money to get preferred fast lanes. Everyone else would be relegated to slow lanes. We all know how frustrating it is try to access slow web pages.



<https://www.womensmarch.com/>

Organizing the Women's March on Washington would have been much harder without Net Neutrality. We may not even have been able to afford it.

Impact on service providers

Squarespace gave us free access to their website service while DoubleDutch gave us free live engagement marketing services. These firms may not even have be around without Net Neutrality.

Startups with innovative technologies often depend on a freemium model to build a large user base. They don't have to 'pay to play' to introduce their services. Their support for non-profits would cost more or have to be curtailed without net neutrality.

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Cost of access

The Women's March website became so popular, that we had to launch our own cloud servers so that everyone could download the day-of guide and map. This cost us very little money (under \$200). We would have had to pay thousands of dollars more for that type of access without net neutrality.

Capacity planning

We might have had to do 'demand planning' - guess how many people were going to use our stuff before they used it. Part of net neutrality is that the providers can't put caps on how much content you can send out. 22 million people visited the Women's March website on the day after the March. More than I ever would have guessed. Without net neutrality we might have only bought enough service for 10 million page loads a day, and Comcast or another company might have cut us off.

Access to online services

Operation Headcount, our marcher prediction operation that helped us make critical crowd safety plans for the massive turnout, was run through inexpensive tools via Google. Google might get charged by Comcast to give people access to google forms and google sheets, making them a lot more expensive.

Impact on social media

Organizations like Facebook might get charged so much to host their content they'll no longer be able to make enough ad revenue to make a profit. Imagine Facebook costing a monthly fee like Netflix. Would we have reached the same number of people on it to let them know about the march?

This is about providers getting more money in order to get your voice out there. The companies already are some of the most profitable in the country. State laws also makes them legal monopolies in most places. My home state, Illinois says the state can only have one cable provider and one DSL provider. Which means we can't just get a competitor to Comcast. So it will be Comcast picking which services get access and which don't.

Seven men serve as Comcast's Executive Officers. There isn't a single woman. How much would Comcast bandwidth cost for a future Women's March without net neutrality?"

Chairman Wheeler on the FCC's Open Internet Rules

9K views



Public reaction

There is a lot at stake here. "The CTIA, a trade organization that represents wireless communications companies, spent about \$11 million on lobbying last year. The National Cable and Telecommunications Association spent almost \$10.2 million, and the U.S. Telecom Association added another \$4.1 million", reports MapLight, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that tracks money in politics.

"About 800 tech start-ups and investors, organized by the Silicon Valley incubator Y Combinator and the San Francisco policy advocacy group Engine, protested the unwinding of net neutrality in a letter sent to Mr. Pai on Wednesday. "Without net neutrality, the incumbents who provide access to the internet would be able to pick winners or losers in the market," they wrote in the letter", reported Cecilia Kang in the NYT.

"It would put consumers at the mercy of phone and cable companies," said Craig Aaron, president of the consumer advocacy group Free Press. "In a fantasy world, all would be fine with a pinkie swear not to interrupt pathways and portals to the internet despite a history of doing that."

Press censorship: Venezuelan-style

"Venezuela ranks 116th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. President Nicolás Maduro's government is hostile towards opposition media". They reduce the amount of press coverage about news critical of the government by reducing the supply of newsprint to the offending publications.

"Pluralism and freedom of information, already hard hit in Venezuela, are being further weakened by the newsprint shortage, which is an indirect form of censorship. All of the newspapers that have had to reduce or suspend production must immediately benefit from the same measures, regardless of their editorial policies. The possibility of an 'emergency' supply of newsprint shows that the shortage affecting the press depends on the government's will," said Camille Soulier, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Americas desk."

Throttling free speech can be done in different ways. Some deny newsprint. Others deny bandwidth.

Can you hear me now?

"We all need to take part during the FCC public comment period", stresses Frank. Make your voice heard here:

Electronic Frontier Foundation - "Tell Congress: Don't Surrender the Internet"

FCC - Form to send them your comments

Battle For The Net - Crowdfunding campaign to save Net Neutrality

Millions of kids play enjoy public parks. They aren't just for rich kids. Equal access to the internet is even more vital than parks. Let's keep it open!

This article is published as part of the IDG Contributor Network. Want to Join?

Deepak Puri, a former Oracle and VMware executive, is the founder of SkilledAnalysts.com, a San Francisco-based IoT consulting firm and co-founder of Democracy Labs, which connects tech and media volunteers with progressive causes and campaigns.



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